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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000074

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RIYADH PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN; DEPARTMENT FOR HERRO
MUSTAFFA IN P AND ANDREW STEINFELD IN NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/09/2028
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KISL](#) [KPAL](#) [WBG](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: GAZA ACCOUNT DEMARCHE RESPONSE: OIC WILL
COORDINATE WITH FAYYAD GOVERNMENT

REF: A. JEDDAH 70 B. SECSTATE 012185

Classified By: Consul General Tatiana C. Gfoeller for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Consul General Tatiana C. Gfoeller delivered demarche (reftel B) in person on February 9 to Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Director General for Political Affairs Mahdy Fathallah and OIC Director for Political Affairs Tariq Ali Bakheet. OIC officials assured Consul General Gfoeller that the OIC would coordinate its efforts to streamline member states' donations for humanitarian relief to Gaza with the Fayyad government. In addition, Fathallah and Bakheet highlighted the February 3 OIC Executive Committee Final Communique on developments in Gaza (septel), inquired about the U.S. appointment of an OIC envoy, and lobbied for the U.S. to consider the OIC "a heavy-weight vote" in the international community. END SUMMARY.

OIC ACCOUNT FOR GAZA

¶2. (S) Regarding the OIC account for Gaza, OIC Director General for Political Affairs Mahdy Fathallah reassured Consul General Tatiana C. Gfoeller that the OIC had and would continue to work with the Fayyad government. He stated that the OIC and the USG see eye to eye on this issue and welcomed her demarche as part of a crucial ongoing dialogue between the USG and the OIC.

¶3. (S) Fathallah emphasized that the OIC was a "political" and "intergovernmental" organization, and as such, only worked with "legitimate" governments. While the OIC has contact with "the opposition" in member states, he added, they only do so with the permission of the legitimate government. He explained that the OIC interacts with the opposition "to collect a correct picture of what is going on." Consul General Gfoeller conveyed U.S. concern for the humanitarian situation in Gaza and highlighted U.S. efforts to assist Gazans over the past year.

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

¶4. (S) On OIC action to address developments in Gaza, Fathallah provided a copy of the Final Communique (septel) from a February 3 OIC Executive Committee meeting (reftel A). He argued that the Committee avoided "strong language of condemnation" while appealing to the international community to solve the crisis in Gaza. He added that the Final Communique demonstrates how the OIC chooses to deal with

"volatile" situations in a moderate and responsible fashion.

U.S. ENVOY TO OIC

15. (S) Switching to the topic of a U.S. envoy to the OIC, Fathallah inquired when the U.S. would appoint someone. (NOTE: President Bush announced on June 27, 2007 U.S. plans to appoint an envoy. END NOTE.) He stated a preference for one who understood the "Islamic perspective" and mentioned that most countries name their Ambassador in Saudi Arabia concurrently as envoy to the OIC. This would work well in the U.S. case as well, he thought; the main thing was to appoint someone with knowledge of the Middle East and to do so soon. He added that if the envoy did not understand fully the Islamic perspective, then such a position would not fulfill its purpose of fostering mutual understanding between the OIC and the U.S.

"A HEAVY-WEIGHT VOTE"

16. (S) Urging the U.S. to consider the OIC "a heavy-weight vote" in the international community, Fathallah stressed that the OIC had a lot to offer the United States. He argued that the number of member states -- 57 -- as well as their wide, geographic distribution, created a powerful bloc that the OIC could mobilize to lobby for its causes. Also, pockets of Muslims throughout the world even in countries with non-Muslim majorities could be "mobilized" at the OIC's bidding. Finally, he argued that the OIC had "real leverage" and could provide the U.S. with a "deep read-out" of events

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in member states such as Iraq and Somalia.
GFOELLER